



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1406 Longworth House Office Building • Washington, D.C. 20515 • (202) 225-5506

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 17, 2005

Contact: Stephanie Lundberg  
Phone: 202-225-5506

## Kind Reintroduces Bill to Strengthen Rural Health Care

*Under plan, seniors given expanded access; cuts stopped to rural providers*

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) is again leading the effort to strengthen rural health care and bring equity to rural providers by reintroducing a bipartisan bill that would increase reimbursements to critical access hospitals (CAHs) and rural health clinics (RHCs) so they can continue to administer quality care to the millions of Medicare beneficiaries living in rural communities, including hundreds of thousands of people throughout rural Wisconsin.

“There are nine million Medicare patients living in rural communities, and these seniors tend to be older, sicker and have less money than those in urban communities,” stated Kind. “Rural seniors are in great need, and we must make sure that their providers can continue caring for them.”

In the past, CAHs and RHCs have been unable to negotiate fair reimbursement policies with managed care plans; as a result, managed care has traditionally had a limited presence in rural areas. Because of the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act, it is expected that Medicare Advantage plans will have a growing influence in rural areas, especially as related to the new prescription drug plans. CAHs and RHCs have expressed concern that they will be unable to negotiate a fair plan with Medicare Advantage and will sustain financial losses.

“Congressman Kind’s legislation brings much needed parity to healthcare providers who are struggling to keep their doors open so they can serve their patients,” said Glen Grady, CEO of Memorial Medical Center in Neillsville. “This bill equalizes the reimbursement model, assuring rural hospitals the same rate under Medicare Advantage that they receive under traditional Medicare.”

The Rural Health Equity Bill (4687), introduced by Rep. Kind and Rep. Tom Osborne (R-NE) would require Medicare Advantage organizations to reimburse CAHs and RHCs hospitals 101% of the payment rate otherwise applicable under the Medicare program. This language is based on the Medicare Modernization Act’s approach to reimbursing federally qualified health centers.

The bill is endorsed by both the American Hospital Association and the National Rural Health Association.